و معلق المستركة المست

CLAIMS

- 1. A method of storing and transporting drilling waste produced in an offshore drilling operation, the method comprising the steps of:
- 5 providing a moveable container for receiving drilling waste;

securing the container in a position below sea-level; connecting the container to a drilling platform or vessel; and

- conveying drilling waste from the platform or vessel to the container.
- 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of: releasing the container from its position; and transporting the container to a drilling waste recycling facility.
 - 3. The method of claim 1 or 2 wherein at least two containers are provided.
 - 4. The method of any preceding claim further comprising the step of agitating the drilling waste within the container.
- 20 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the agitation step

20

15

comprises rotating or otherwise moving the container in the water.

- 6. The method of claim 5 wherein the container is provided with external fins or the like which tend to rotate or move the container in response to sea currents.
- 7. The method of any preceding claim comprising the step of securing the container in position by anchoring the container to the seabed.
- 8. The method of any preceding claim further comprising
 the step of adjusting the buoyancy of the container, to
 maintain the container at a substantially constant depth.
 - 9. The method of any preceding claim comprising the step of releasably fixing the container to the sea floor.
- 10. The method of any preceding claim further comprising
 the step of conveying drilling waste to a smaller volume
 holding tank on the platform, prior to conveying the waste
 to the container.
 - 11. The method of any preceding claim comprising the step of macerating the drilling waste prior to conveying the waste to the container.

15

20

16

- 12. The method of any preceding claim further comprising the step of determining selected parameters of the waste prior and then adjusting said parameters before conveying the waste to the container.
- 5 13. The method of any preceding claim further comprising the step of adding oil to the drilling waste prior to conveying the waste to the container.
 - 14. The method of any preceding claim further comprising the step of agitating the contents of the container whilst the container is transported to a treatment facility.
 - 15. The method of any preceding claim further comprising the steps of:

providing an additional container; and

maintaining at least one container at the platform or vessel.

16. An apparatus for use in storage and transport of drilling waste, the apparatus comprising a moveable container for containing drilling waste; securing means for releasably securing the container in position below sea level; and connection means for connecting the container to a drilling platform or vessel.

20

17

- 17. The apparatus of claim 16 wherein the securing means comprises an anchor means to be attached to the sea bed.
- 18. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the anchor means comprises a base to be located on the seabed, configured so as to receive and retain at least one container.
- 19. The apparatus of any one of claims 16 to 18 wherein the container comprises agitation means, to enable the contents of the container to be agitated.
- 20. The apparatus of claim 19 wherein the agitation means 10 comprises an internal rotating paddle.
 - 21. The apparatus of claim 19 or claim 20 wherein the agitation means comprises external fins mounted on the container, such that the container rotates in response to sea currents.
- 15 22. The apparatus of any one of claims 16 to 21 wherein the container is of adjustable buoyancy.
 - 23. The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the container comprises a double skin, with a cavity between the skins which may be filled with air or seawater as desired, in order to adjust buoyancy.

- 24. The apparatus of any one of claims 16 to 23 wherein the connection means comprises a flexible conduit for conveying drilling waste.
- 25. The apparatus of claim 24 wherein a plurality of5 flexible conduits are provided.
 - 26. The apparatus of any one of claims 16 to 25 further comprising a holding tank for holding drilling waste prior to conveying the waste to the container.
- 27. The apparatus of any of claims 16 to 26, further comprising a macerator.
 - 28. The apparatus of any of claims 16 or 27 further including means for determining selected parameters of the drilling waste.
- 29. The apparatus of any of claims 16 to 28, further comprising means for adding oil to the drilling waste.